17. Disafforestation of Lands.

Mr. TOMMAN JOSEPH (*Member, Todupuzha taluk*) pointed out that, in a State like Travancore where agriculture was the mainstay of the people and where 86 per cent. of the population depended on agriculture for livelihood, the area set apart for reservation *viz.*, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the area of the whole State was, too large. In former days the quantity of paddy produced in the State was more than sufficient to meet local demands. But that had already become impossible and a large quantity of paddy had annually to be imported in spite of the best efforts of the Agricultural Department to improve the productivity of the soil. It was, therefore, of the utmost importance to increase the area under paddy cultivation by disafforesting all available forest lands.

As a first step in that direction, it was necessary to disafforest all the swampy areas selected by the majority of the members of the several disafforestation committees. In the Todupuzha taluk itself, the committee for that taluk selected 50 blocks of land for disafforestation ; but the Government, in consultation with the Conservator of Forests, sanctioned the disafforestation of only six blocks. The remaining blocks were not disafforested on the ground of their smallness in extent. The lands selected lay adjacent to registered holdings and were under occupation in 1093, when the boundaries of the reserved forests were fixed. Similar lands had been disafforested from the reserves of the Muvattupuzha taluk even though they were much smaller in extent. The Government were spending large sums of money on irrigation projects and for minor irrigation works and for increasing the extent of wet lands in South Travancore. Such being the case, it was but fair that at least those lands in North Travancore naturally suited for paddy cultivation should be disafforested.

Again, the Government had refused to disafforest portions of the lands selected by the Muvattupuzha Disafforestation Committee on the ground that the lands in question were situated in the Todupuzha taluk. The member requested that those lands also should be disafforested at once.

He next urged the necessity for registering dry lands surrounding the wet lands situated within reserved forests for the beneficial enjoyment of the latter. In the Todupuzha reserve, there were several *ayacut* registries and the registry-holders were occupying the adjoining lands for the beneficial enjoyment of the registered lands. But those being unregistered lands were included in the reserved forests and the ryots had been prevented from protecting their lands from the inroads of wild animals and also denied facilities for grazing their cattle. Moreover, the ever-growing foliage in the adjoining tracts prevented sunlight falling upon the registered lands and thereby reduced the yield of the fields. He wished that, for every acre of wet land situated within reserved forests, 5 acres of dry land around it should also be set free from the forests and registered in the name of the owner and the boundaries of the forests re-fixed accordingly.

Lastly, he requested that an extent of 1,200 acres of land comprised in Survey Nos. 1471/1, 1478/1, 1463/1 and 1459/1 included in the Todupuzha reserve and lying west of the village road from Neduvakad to Arattukadavu be disafforested and sold in auction in small blocks. Those Survey Nos. were afforested only very recently and till then they were used for *virippu* cultivation. The Government derived no appreciable revenue by reserving the lands.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Tomman Joseph, I find that the orders of the Government have already been issued in regard to the first, second and third points of your representation ; for instance, they have sanctioned the disafforestation of six blocks in the Todupuzha taluk. The other blocks that the committee recommended are either too small or are situated in the heart of the reserved forests.

MEMBER : They are very near the boundary.

DEWAN: But the local officer says that some of these places are situated in the heart of the reserved forests and if they are given up, it will be impossible for the proper working of the department.

MEMBER: They are not in the heart of the forests.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

DEWAN: That is a question of fact in which you are at direct variance with the information before me. I will have that matter looked into.

Then you come to the lands in the Todupuzha taluk which the committee working in Muvattupuzha very kindly recommended to be registered. What the committee working at Muvattupuzha has to do with the lands in Todupuzha passes my comprehension. Therefore, you have to excuse the Government if they do not find their way to fall in with the views of the Muvattupuzha gentlemen. The matter has to be further investigated.

You come next to the disafforestation of Survey Nos. 1463/1 and 1471/1 in Reserve No. 23 of the Neriamangalam Range and the lands in Survey Nos. 1459/1 and 1478/1 lying west of the pathway from Neduvakad to Arattukadavu. Portions of Survey Nos. 1459/1 and 1478/1 have already been disafforested. Then Survey Nos. 1463/1 and 1471/1 are large areas belonging to some of the best Todupuzha forests and they cannot be disafforested without serious detriment to the working of the department.

MEMBER: The sites are bounded on all sides by registered lands.

DEWAN: You say it is bounded on all sides ?

MEMBER: Yes.

DEWAN: I will have that matter examined. They form an integral part of the forest reserves and are so very necessary for the forests to be maintained at all, that I can hold out very little hopes of acceding to your representation in that matter. In regard to many of the lands, orders have been passed and those in respect of which orders have not been passed, will be re-examined and I shall see if there is any possibility for more disafforestation.

18. Administration of the Excise Department.

MR. MAHOMED HANEEF (*Member, Municipal Council, Kuzhittura*) represented that the Government were not adequately encouraging the manufacture of local salt. If sufficient encouragement had been given and the salt factories maintained in a satisfactory condition, all the salt required for local consumption could be produced locally. Although the area under salt cultivation had increased from 305 acres in 1092 to 482 acres in 1100, the output per acre had fallen from 1,975 maunds in 1092 to 1,168 maunds in 1100.

One of the reasons for the decrease was the absence of a scientific expert to give advice on salt cultivation. In 1093, the Government, with a view to deal satisfactorily with the question of salt manufacture, ordered the joint inspection of the salt factories in South Travancore by the Chief Engineer and the Excise Commissioner. But instead of removing the obstacles to the manufacture of salt then pointed out, the Government, in 1094, assigned an additional area of 104 acres from the Manakudi lake for salt cultivation. Further additions to the area under salt cultivation were made later, but no measures were adopted to ensure either the supply of good brine or the prevention of flood water in *alloms*.

A second reason for the decrease was that local salt licensees were not given sufficient encouragement in the production of salt. The salt produced in the factories was not taken delivery of after due weighment, at the proper time and on prompt payment of *kudivaram*. Although, in reply to a representation made on the subject at the eighteenth session of the Assembly, it was stated that a decision would soon be reached in the matter of storage and weighment of salt, no decision had yet been made. Under the agreements made with the salt licensees, the Government were bound to accept delivery of salt stored by the licensees before the 30th Medam every year after payment of *kudivaram*. But that was never done in practice. If the salt already stored was not promptly taken delivery of, there would be difficulty in storing further quantities for want of space. When the matter was brought to the notice of the Government at the eighteenth session of the Assembly by Mr. Subrahmanya Karayalar, he was told that fresh salt should be heaped up for a period of 9 or 10 months before it could be used for human consumption. But in reply to an interpellation regarding the period of dryage of salt, the Government stated that there was no such fixed period, but that the salt should be completely dry before it

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly